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Deputy Director, ITS Joint Program Office.

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Federal Railroad Administration

Notification of Funds Availability for Next Generation High-Speed Rail Corridor Studies

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration; Department of Transportation.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (Public Law 104-205 (September 30, 1996)), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has \$900,000 in next generation high speed rail funds available for grants to eligible participants for high speed rail corridor planning assistance, including preliminary engineering and operational analysis, and other planning activities. This notice sets forth the criteria by which FRA will make its selection of grant recipients. The FRA strongly supports the advancement of high-speed rail in congested corridors where it can be an important component of a balanced transportation system. Further, FRA believes the development or continuation of high-speed rail in specific corridors should be undertaken as a partnership of states, localities, and the private sector, with support from the Federal government. Pursuant to the Swift Rail Development Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-440 (November 2, 1994)), the Secretary may provide financial assistance to a public agency or group of public agencies for corridor planning for up to 50 percent of the publicly financed costs associated with eligible activities. Not less than 20 percent of the publicly financed costs associated with eligible activities shall come from State and local sources, which State and local sources may not include funds from any Federal programs. (In determining Federal, state and local shares under this provision, private financial assistance is to be first deducted. Then a Federal ceiling of 50 percent and a state and local floor of 20 percent is applied. The state and local funds must exclude funds made available from any Federal program. The remaining 30 percent of the non-private financed portion of the project may be paid for using funds made available to the applicant from other Federal programs).

Criteria for Funding

Eligible participants are encouraged to submit a request for funding which addresses the following criteria:

1. The level of interest in the chosen corridor demonstrated by State, regional, and local governments and elected officials or other interested groups. Interest can be shown by the past and proposed financial commitments and in-kind resources of State and local governments and the private sector.

2. The extent to which the proposed planning focuses on systems which will achieve sustained speeds of 125 mph or greater.

3. The degree of integration of the corridor into metropolitan area and statewide transportation planning.

4. The potential interconnection of the corridor with other parts of the Nation's transportation system, including the interconnection with other countries.

5. The anticipated effect of the corridor on the congestion of other modes of transportation.

6. Whether the work to be funded will aid the efforts of state and local governments to enhance compliance with Federal environmental laws and regulations.

7. The estimated level of ridership and the estimated capital cost of corridor improvements, including the cost of closing, improving, or separating highway-rail grade crossings.

8. Whether a specific route has been selected, specific improvements identified, and capacity studies completed, and whether the corridor has been designated as a high-speed rail corridor under Section 1010 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, Public Law 102-240 (December 18, 1991).

Eligible Participants: Any state government, local government, organization of state and/or local government, or any combination of such entities is eligible to apply for funding.

DOT Electronic Grants Pilot Project

All applicants are eligible and encouraged to participate in the "DOT Electronic Grants Pilot Project." Through this pilot project, grant applicants will be provided with access to specially designed Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) data screens on DOT's World Wide Web (WWW) homepage. The screens and related system components will enable customers to submit grant applications electronically including the Application for Federal Assistance, SF-424. Applicants will also be provided the

capability to submit proposals as text document attachments to the electronic application.

Future enhancements will provide for electronic submission of grant reports and payment requests.

To participate or for more information, please contact Brad Smith, Federal Railroad Administration, via e-mail at: bradley.smith@fra.dot.gov or tel.: (202) 632-3276.

Deadline For Requests for Grant Applications: Eligible participants desiring to apply for this funding should notify FRA by letter, and FRA will respond initially by providing a standard grant application package. For priority consideration, FRA requests that the completed grant application packages be returned to the below address by March 3, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Applications should be submitted to: Honorable Jolene M. Molitoris, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration, ATTN: RDV-11, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John F. Cikota at (202) 632-3264.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on December 2, 1996.

Jolene M. Molitoris,

Federal Railroad Administrator.

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Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33294]

Grand Trunk Western Railroad Incorporated—Trackage Rights Exemption—Consolidated Rail Corporation

Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail) has agreed to grant limited overhead trackage rights to Grand Trunk Western Railroad Incorporated (GTW) between the Conrail/GTW connection on Conrail's North Yard Branch at CP-Vinewood (MP 3.1+), Detroit, MI, and the connection with GTW's existing rights over Conrail (pursuant to an agreement between the parties dated September 27, 1984), at the connection between Conrail and the Ann Arbor Railroad on Conrail's Detroit Line, at Alexis, OH (MP 50.3+).

The transaction was scheduled to be consummated on or after the November 28, 1996 effective date of the exemption.

The purpose of the trackage rights is to attract to rail service certain automotive parts traffic moving between Detroit and Toledo by improving service and transit time.